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AN
ADDRESS,
FROM THE ASSEMBLY
OF THE
GENERAL BAPTISTS,
HELD AT
WORSHIP-STREET,
LONDON,

Wednesday, 15th of MAY, 1799,
TO THE CHURCHES WHICH THEY REPRESENT,
ON

The Respective Duties of Ministers and People.

By SAMPSON KINGSFORD.

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AN
ADDRESS
FROM THE ASSEMBLY
OF THE
GENERAL BAPTISTS,



WOLSTED STREET,

LONDON.

Witnessed by a full of May, 1799.

TO THE CHURCHES WITH THE ASSOCIATION

The Republic of the United States of America

IN SAMUEL JOHNSON

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1799.

AN ADDRESS, &c.

ON THE RESPECTIVE DUTIES

OF

MINISTERS AND PEOPLE.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

BY the appointment of the General Baptist Assembly, the Address this year has for its subject the respective duties of Ministers and People.

The duty of Ministers to the people may be comprehended under the following general heads.

1. Ministers should faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully minister the words of life and salvation unto them. Ministers are stewards of the mysteries of the gospel, and it becomes stewards to be faithful, for they must give an account of their stewardship. Having treasure in earthen vessels, they have it for the benefit of those with whom they are connected; and in the improvement of

what is deposited with them, they must be faithful to God, ever remembering that God is present, sees all their actions, knows all their motives, and will reward or punish accordingly. Faithful should they be to Christ, who hath counted them worthy putting them into the ministry, as well as faithful to their own souls in so important a charge as is committed to them.

In the discharge of this duty to the people, Ministers should remember that preaching is not to be considered merely as an exercise of abilities, nor the occupation of a little time in the pulpit; they ought to consider the great end of preaching is to save those that hear, to be to them a favor of life unto life. Souls should be precious in their view, and the grand object should not be forgotten. They should be faithful in speaking the truth, and speaking plainly to the cases and consciences of their hearers, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, warning the wicked of the error of his way; at the same time, not withholding from the timid, the fearful, and the righteous, that encouragement highly necessary for them in their journey towards Heaven.

If Ministers wish to be faithful, they will also be diligent:—diligent in studying God's word, in collecting useful matter, and treating subjects in such a manner, that the duties of religion may be clearly understood, that the understanding may be enlightened, the heart warmed with divine and generous principles, and the affections of the people raised towards Heaven.

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Let it be added, if cheerfulness be united with the duty they owe to the people in preaching the word of God, the work will be doubly pleasant and profitable. What is done should be with a willing mind. God loves a cheerful giver. Freely they have received; freely they ought to communicate. The discharge of this duty to the people they will not consider as a burden, but exulting as did the apostle, "*to me is this grace given,*" counting it an honor, and the joy of their hearts, that they are employed in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. It is the duty of Ministers to bear on their minds an affectionate concern for the people to whom they preach.

Without this principle, what can be expected? with it, may we not look for blessed fruits as the consequence? There will be a solicitous concern that will show itself in various ways. A Minister having this principle pervading his heart will be ready in the service of the people, ardently panting for their best interests. He will feel their wants and their sorrows, and affectionately mix his tears with theirs. He will lament their weaknesses; and their increase of piety and holiness will rejoice his heart. He will be affable, kind, and condescending, shewing himself their servant for Christ's sake. He will be always ready, like his great Master, to go about doing good.

3. A Minister should pray for the people.

If possessed of such principles as he ought to have, will not this be natural? Does he not wish their welfare? Can he then go to a God of infinite fullness and the people be forgotten?—No!—They will have a share in his prayers, he will intercede and his mouth will be filled with arguments on their behalf. This duty is sanctioned by apostles, and Christ himself most affectionately poured out his soul to God his Heavenly Father, praying not only for those who were at that time his disciples, but also for those who should afterwards believe.

4. It is the duty of Ministers to visit the people—not only with a view just to see them, and slightly to touch on the trifling subjects of the present day, but his design should be to instruct, to encourage, to caution, to give salutary advice, as the case and circumstances of the people require. He ought to give advice to the young, and solacing comfort to the aged. If any have erred, he will endeavour to restore such in the spirit of meekness; he will not fail to exhort, to teach, and admonish with all long suffering goodness. He will watch over their souls for good, and, as it is his duty to pray *for* them, so also will he pray *with* them; cautious at all times in his personal visits, that they be not too often nor burdensome, and that things be so accommodated, that pleasure and profit be united.

Various other things might be suggested, and those already mentioned might be more copiously treated; but brevity being requisite, I shall next, in a few words, suggest the duty of the People to their Ministers.

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1. The People should respect and esteem their Ministers.

We must conceive a duty to be supported in some measure from the nature of things. If Ministers have no respectability of character it will be difficult to respect them; but their situation and employ suppose degrees of preeminence. If they were defective in mental abilities, in moral and religious character, would you chose them your Ministers? If acting as Ministers, does not *that* relation indicate them to be such persons as will arrest your esteem? Does not the apostle *Paul* in inforcing this duty suggest a double ground for it? *Esteem them—and esteem them highly for their work sake.* Hence, a modern writer on the Pastoral Office, of great eminence and piety, has very justly observed, that “ Whenever Ministers are exercising their office they are doing something for the instruction, the sanctification, or salvation of the people; and by being employed for purposes so beneficial to them, they cannot but be intitled to their affection and gratitude. To refuse these attachments, is to declare that they reckon these no services. Love and esteem will add force to one another, and will lead them to treat Ministers both with respect and kindness, and to do them all the good offices in their power, with an acknowledged sense that they are *due* to them.”

2. People should endeavour to conceal rather than aggravate the failings and imbecillities of their Ministers.

Ministers are but men, and men of like passions with others. They have their tempers, their constitutional

tutional attachments. If the people expect them to be completely perfect, they will be mistaken. Should there be discoverable in them specks and blemishes, (comparatively trifling with things immoral and irreligious,) how should people conduct themselves? Undoubtedly with a temper and disposition ready to make allowances the most favourable—to correct, if they can; but if there be no prospect of that, not to aggravate, or magnify the mole-hill into a mountain, but to conceal and cover with the mantle of charity. It is unknown the mischief that the officiousness of imprudent communications has done, the usefulness it has prevented in gospel ministrations. We may readily conclude, the venerable *Paul* had in view the evil as well as wickedness of unguarded insinuations against the characters of public preachers, when he advised—that accusations against Elders be before two or three witnesses.

3 It is the duty of the People to co-operate with Ministers in their labours.

The business Ministers have to accomplish, ought to be an object of the earnest wishes of the People. Nor ought Ministers to be left alone in the work. Those not Ministers may assist, they can assist, they ought to assist. Ministers, unaided by the people, how little, comparatively speaking, can be accomplished! —The Minister's labour will be like beating the air. Let but the people cordially concur with him, rough places will then be made smooth, and crooked paths straight. Ministers will find their hands strengthened, their

their hearts refreshed, their labours facilitated, and no doubt but then the work of the Lord will prosper in their hands.

4. Is it the duty of Ministers to pray for the people; the People also should pray for their Ministers.

Eminent as was the apostle *Paul*, extraordinary as were his accomplishments for the work of the ministry, yet repeatedly did he request of Christians, that they would pray for him and his fellow-labourers—*brethren, pray for us*. We wish your help, we need your prayers. Not only will your prayers call down heavenly benedictions on us, but they will melt our hearts to united feelings with you, and for you. Your prayers will invigorate all our endeavours for public benefit. Pray for us, that we may be filled with heavenly wisdom; be preserved amidst the variegated evils and temptations of life, that our private and public labours may be blessed, that we may have boldness and utterance, that so God's word may run and be glorified.

5. Another duty of people to their Ministers is that of contributing to their necessities.

Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? Must not ministers subsist by the same means that others do? They are to live by faith; but they cannot live by fasting! If their time, their talents, their best days, are devoted to your service, should there be no return? If they minister in spiritual things, ought not ye to minister of things carnal? This duty stands on the ground

ground of justice and equity, is strongly enforced by holy scripture; and if the subject be maturely considered, gratitude itself will powerfully stimulate the people to make some adequate return for the studious indefatigable labours of their Ministers.

Finally; Is it not the duty of the people to encourage their ministers by a constant attendance on ordinances administered, and the public preaching the word of God?

To what purpose is preaching if there be none to hear? Who ought to be more constant to hear than those who have embraced Christianity, and commenced disciples of the blessed Jesus? If such are remiss in their attendance, may not Christ's expostulating appeal be applied to them — *will ye also go away?* That people not professing religion, should be careless, inattentive, and indifferent to preaching, and other religious exercises, is easy to be accounted for: but how inexcusable must it be for those connected with a Minister in a Christian Society, to neglect from time to time, the great means of edification! Do they not want instruction *themselves*? Should they not encourage the diffusion of religious knowledge to *others*? Why then is the house of God forsaken, and the public duties of religion neglected? Ought not the people to support and encourage, by personal attendance, their Ministers in duties that are of the highest importance?

Brethren, CHRIST has said of his Church, that *the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!* And, if Ministers

ters and People cordially unite together, and diligently discharge their various reciprocal duties, Christian Societies will then be flourishing and pleasant, ripening for that better and more glorious abode, which God has prepared for those that love him.

FINIS.